

Safety Leading & Lagging Indicators Worksheet

Balance your safety measurement so you can see around corners instead of only counting what's already behind you.

ORGANIZATION	COMPLETED BY	DATE
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Why Incident Rates Aren't Enough

For many contractors, a Total Recordable Incident Rate below a client threshold isn't a goal - it's survival. Lose the number, lose access to client sites. But TRIR tells you how many people got hurt, not why, and not what's about to go wrong. By the time it spikes, the damage is done. If incident rates are the only safety metrics you track, you're driving by looking in the rearview mirror.

ISO 45001 expects you to monitor both the effectiveness of your controls and the performance of your OH&S processes - which means forward-looking metrics alongside incident data. Most organizations are heavy on lagging and light on leading. This worksheet fixes the balance.

The Two Types

LAGGING - "WHAT HAPPENED?"	LEADING - "WHAT ARE WE DOING TO STAY SAFE?"
Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) • Lost Time Incident Rate (LTIR) • DART rate • Experience Modification Rate (EMR) • workers' compensation costs	Safety inspection completion rates • near-miss reporting frequency • hazard identification submissions • training completion against deadlines • corrective action closure rates for safety findings

THE BLIND SPOT

Zero incidents might mean zero reporting, not zero hazards. Without leading indicators measuring inspection activity, hazard identification, and near-miss reporting, you can't distinguish a genuinely safe operation from one where people just aren't speaking up.

Step 1: Baseline Your Lagging Indicators

You need these for OSHA reporting, insurance, client pre-qualification, and trend analysis. Record where you stand.

INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE	TARGET / THRESHOLD	WHO REQUIRES IT (CLIENT, INSURER, CORPORATE)
Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR)			
Lost Time Incident Rate (LTIR)			
DART rate			
Experience Modification Rate (EMR)			
Workers' compensation costs			
Other:			

Step 2: Choose Leading Indicators That Actually Work

Not all leading indicators are useful. "Number of safety meetings held" tells you a meeting happened - not whether it changed anything. Effective leading indicators share three characteristics: they connect to specific risks (percentage of high-risk work orders with a completed job hazard analysis), they're actionable (average time to close high-priority safety corrective actions gives you a bottleneck to manage), and they don't create more work than the safety activity itself.

Start with three to five you already have data for - training records, inspection logs, corrective action tracking, near-miss reports:

LEADING INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE	TARGET	OWNER
Inspection completion rate - are scheduled safety inspections actually happening on time?				
Training compliance - what percentage of required safety training is current versus overdue?				
Near-miss reporting frequency - trending up (good - people are reporting) or flat/down (concerning)?				

Corrective action closure rate - are safety corrective actions completed within target timeframes?				
Hazard identification submissions - are workers reporting hazards between formal assessments?				
Your own (tied to a specific risk):				
Your own:				

THE FRAMING THAT WORKS

Run a session separating "what tells us something went wrong" from "what tells us we're preventing things from going wrong." Once framed that way, teams immediately see which side of their measurement is weak.

Step 3: Connect Both to Management Review

Present lagging indicators as strategic performance measures - "TRIR is 0.4, down from 0.7; workers' comp costs decreased accordingly" - to show system effectiveness and support resource decisions. Present leading indicators as operational early warnings - "inspection completion dropped last quarter; night shift is understaffed and inspections are getting skipped; we need to act before it shows up in incident data." If management review only looks at incident rates, leadership is making decisions based on outcomes they can no longer influence.

Getting-Started Checklist

ACTION	DONE	OWNER	TARGET DATE
Pick three to five leading indicators you already have data sources for.	☐		
Start measuring and trending them monthly alongside existing lagging metrics.	☐		
Include both types in the next management review, with the "what happened" versus "what we're preventing" distinction.	☐		
Review quarterly: replace any indicator that isn't driving action or telling you anything useful.	☐		

The goal isn't a massive dashboard. It's balanced measurement - three to five leading indicators, actively managed, next to the lagging numbers your clients and insurers already demand.

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3-6 month typical timeline

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